

THE LADY AND THE PIRATE



BY
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CHAPTER XXIV.

In Which Land Shows in the Offing.

I REACHED the switch, and an instant later a dozen high candle-power bulbs flooded the suit with light. With a little cry of dismay Helena sprang away and stood at my shaving glass arranging her hair. Now and then she turned her face just enough to smile at me a little, her eyes dark, languid, heavy-lidded, a faint shadow of lips beneath. And now and then her breast heaved as though it were a sea-lane troubled by a stormy sea.

"What will you say?" she asked at last.

"Oh, nothing, you shall not know."

"I must have some manner of revenge against a villain who has taken advantage of me while I was in his power!"

"Ah, heartless jade!"

"So you shall wait until you are ashore? I will give you what you desire!"

"When?"

"Now. And you shall open them at your friend's house as soon as you are all settled and untroubled after leaving the boat as soon as—"

"It looks as though it were as soon as you please, but when I please?"

"Harry, it is my revenge for the indignities you have heaped on me. Do you think a girl will submit to that mockery to be humiliated, abused, endangered as I have been? No, it is—"

"I have owned I loved you. So many girls have been mistaken about things when—when the moon is a desert island or—something has bewitched them. But I haven't said I would marry you, have I ever?"

"No, I don't care about that so much as the other, but I care a very, very great deal about it. You, you, are cruel. You are a heartless jade."

"And you have been a cruel and ruthless pirate!"

"No. And she evaded me and gained the door. 'I must go. Oh, it's all a ruin now. And I'll be furious. And what shall I say?'"

"Give her some words and my love. And when do I get mine?"

"In five minutes."

She was gone. I looked about, stinging for that she was gone. Then I noted that our friend Partial had gone with her. "Fie! Partial, after all, you loved her more!" I said to myself.

But in a few moments I heard a faint sound at my door. I opened. There stood Partial in the dusk, gravely wagging his tail, looking at me without moving his head. And I saw that he held delicately in his mouth a dainty note, addressed to me in the same handwriting as that on the note I had sent out from the heartless jade to you varied. And it was sealed and marked with instructions for its opening—"When You Two Varieties Meet."

No more.

"Peterson," said I, addressing to the forward deck, where I found him smoking. "I've been getting up some correspondence, since we'll be ashore by tomorrow noon."

"I don't know as to that, Mr. Harry."

"Well, I know about it. So tell Williams that, even if he has to work all night, we must be moving as soon as it's light enough to see. I've got a very important message."

"By wireless, Mr. Harry?" chuckled the old man.

"Yes, by wireless. And I looked at Partial, who wagged his tail and smiled. "So I must get into Manning's and the first possible moment tomorrow."

Before the white sea mist had rolled away I was on deck and had summoned a general conference of my crew.

"Polyte," I demanded of our old pilot, "it will be three days, four days, before a letter could get from the lighthouse to New Orleans?"

"Qui, maybe so."

"And how long will it take us to get in to the plantation of M. Edouard, above there?"

"H'll could not said, monsieur. Maybe three, four day—sais pas."

"Toly Mackinaw!" I remarked sotto voce.

By now Williams, who, judging by certain rappings, hammerings and clankings heard through the cabin walls back and above the engine room, had been at work much of the night had reported and, much to my pleasure, we could go ahead.

So at last, after many windings and doublings, we came in at the rear of the timbered slopes and could see the mansion houses and the offices of the state old plantation where dwelt my friend Edouard Manning, who knew nothing of my coming.

After custom I signaled loud and often with the boat's whistle, so that the men might come to the landing for us, and in order that Edouard himself might be warned I gave orders to my

hardy mates to make proper nautical salute of honor.

"Cast loose the stern chaser, says Lafitte," said I, "and do you and L'Ouonnois load and fire her once as you like until we land or until you burst her."

Obediently they obeyed, and soon the rear of our deck gun echoed fearfully along the slopes as had no gun since the sail-boat Union navy in the civil war had pounded at the gates of Edouard's father and until scores of cooks and sailors had been killed.

"We follow back the Avenue, and let my mate in step us at their general dress, run up the flag while I land her up again."

And John having once landed the ship and crew, we all went ashore, head and shoulders in a specially arranged row as he stood with folded arms on our bow deck, in a white shirt and a mid-Atlantic might have called rather an impressive array as we swept into the Manning landing.

I was not surprised to see Edouard himself there, and his wife and some thirty odd dogs and as many black, waiting for us at the wharf. Now was I surprised to see that all seemed somewhat to marvel at our manner of advent, though I knew that Edouard, through his politeness, had recognized both my boat and myself long before we made the last drive and came gently in to the wharf when the grinning darkness could send our flag.

What did surprise me—and perhaps for a time I may have shown some surprise—was to see, in all this gay throng, two forms and usual on the Manning landing. One was the elegantly suited and refined smiling figure of Sally Emory and the other the robust, full-bodied, grumpy old man of my old friend Cal Davidson.

How or why they came there I could not say for the moment.

The two women, I heard a stern voice say at my ear. "Remember me, but it shall go hard with him. I'm heading her up with machine guns!"

But I had no more than time to perceive my two companions to modify this purpose and partially to divert themselves before the two groups were mingling, with much chattering and laughing and gay saluting.

Edouard, hat in hand, was on deck, before our friends reached the wharf, laughing and waving his hands and looking up at my flag.

"I knew you were coming," said he. "Face is, all the country's been looking for you. Davidson just got in a couple of hours ago, and you know his hat is an old friend of Mrs. Manning's. And—"

He was shaking the hands of Mrs. Davidson and Helena almost before I could present them.

"By Jove, old man," Edouard found time to say to me, "I congratulate you! She's away beyond her pictures!"

He had her mean Mrs. Davidson, and he had mean Mrs. Davidson. I could only stare his head and attempt no comment as to the conversation, for part of that was a matter which yet rested in a sealed envelope in my pocket, and as best I could be three or four days, but then, with a great flash of arrested intelligence it was borne in upon me that perhaps after all it was not so much a question of the tardy United States mails because you varied, fat and waxy and well content with life already, by some means and for some reason had outrun the mails. He was here, and we had met. It need not be four days before I could learn my fate. I reached into my pocket and looked at my sealed orders. No matter what Davidson's letter held, here was Davidson himself.

"Oh, I say, there, you Harry, confound you!" roared Davidson to me in his great voice above the heads of everybody. "I say, what did I tell you?"

CHAPTER XXV.

In Which I Admit I Was Jealous.

NOW, I had not the slightest idea what Davidson had told me, nor what he meant by warring a paper over his head. "They've signed Dingheimer for next year! Now, what do you think of that? World's championship, and good old Dingheimer for next year—I guess that's pretty poor for them little old Glams, what?"

And he smiled like one devoid of all care as well as of all reason.

I myself smiled just a moment later, after I had greeted the Manning ladies, had seen Helena step up and kiss Sally Byington fervently, directly on the

check, whose two green coloring I once had heard her decry; had slapped Edouard joyously on the shoulders and pointed to my pirate flag and gleaming black visaged crew—I say I also smiled suddenly when I felt a hand touch me on the shoulder.

"Polyte, the pilot, stood, cap in hand, and asked me to one side."

"Pardon, monsieur," said he, "but these gentle ladies—these fat ones—see off abel' was M. Davidson who'll H'll got letter on beam from those lighthouse, beam?"

"Why, yes, Polyte—the letter you said would take four days to get to New Orleans."

"Polyte smiled sheepishly. 'He'll wouldn't took four days now, monsieur! H'll got it half those letter beam. H'll change the coat on the lighthouse, maybe, but H'll got the coat of Guillaume with half those letter in her, yass?' And he now handed me the entire packet of letters, which I had supposed left far behind us on the previous day."

I took the letters from him and handed all of them but one to Edouard's old body servant to put in the office mail. The remaining one I held in the same hand with its mate, and I motioned Davidson aside to a spot under a live oak as the other began now slowly to move toward the path from the landing up the hill.

"This is for you," said I, handing him his letter, and told him how it came to him.

"It's from Helena, dear old girl. Isn't she a trump, after all?" he said, feasting upon the letter and glancing at it.

"She is a dear girl, Mr. Davidson," said I, smiling. "Yes."

"Why, of course—yes, of course, I'd have done it if I'd got this before I left the city," said he, "but how can I say?" holding the letter open in his hand.

"So you mean to tell me"—I began, but stopped in anger mixed with curiosity. "What was it she had asked of him, offered to him? And was not Helena's wish a command?"

"Yes, I mean to tell you or any one else I'd do a favor to a lady if I could, but—"

"What favor, Mr. Davidson?" I demanded.

"Well, why Mr. Davidson? Ain't I some gal in spite of all the muss you make of my plans? Why I'd killed it I'll pay you the charter money at all after the way you've acted, and all."

"Mr. Davidson, didn't the charter money?"

"That's what I say. What's charter money? All right, if you forgo half the charter fee, I'll forgive the other half, and—"

"What was in the letter from her?"

"It's some of your business, Harry, but I don't mind saying that Miss Emory wrote me and said that if I was still—oh, I say, I'm roared, turn my head and poking a finger into my ribs, 'if you haven't got on one of my trousers!'"

"The one with pink stripes," said I, still lefty, and dashed back once they are. And these clothes I borrowed from my friend, but then—"

"I see you must have come in a hurry, eh?"

"Yes, but come now, old man, what's in that letter? I've got one of my own here, but in the same hand—here, I can under sealed orders—until I shall have you, which is now. So I suppose some sort of explanation is due on both sides. We might as well have it all out here before we join the happy party, so as to avoid any awkwardness."

"Oh, nothing in my letter to amount to anything," he replied. "Miss Emory only wanted to know if I'd please have her trunk shipped out here from New Orleans—only that—and she asked me please to bring her a box of marshmallows, as hers were all gone. She's polite always, dear old Helena. She says here: 'So pleasant in our journey in every way, and so kind have you been to me, and so thoughtful in providing every luxury, that I cannot think of a single thing I could ask for except some more marshmallows. Jimmie, the young lady—my nephew, you know—has found mine, though I hid them under both cushions in the state-room.'"

I had my hat off and was wiping my forehead. A sudden burst of glory seemed to me to envelop all the world. If there had been duplicity anywhere I did not care.

"Don't you open your letter now?" said I.

"Yes," said I, and did so. It contained just two words (Helena afterward said she had not time to write more than a little Latin) which were in from the other state-room.

"Well, what's it say, dash you?" demanded Cal Davidson. "Play fair now—I told, and so must you!"

"I'm dashed if I do, Cal," said I, and put it in my pocket. But I shook hands with him most warmly.

"But I say, old man," began Davidson presently. "It's all right for a joke, but my word, it was an awfully big one and an awfully risky one, too—your stealing your own yacht from me! I didn't think it of you. You not only broke up my boat party—you see, Sally was going on down with us from Natchez—Miss Emory said she'd be glad to have her come, and, of course, she and Mrs. Danvers made it proper, all right—I say, you not only bowed that all up, but by not sending a fellow the least word of what you were going to do you got those silly newspapers crazy from New Orleans to New York—why, you're famous—that's the worst of it. I don't just fancy you'll just fancy some of those pictures or some of those stories. Least you can do now is to marry Helena and the old girl, too, right off!"

"In part that is good advice," said I. "I wish I could wear your clothes, Cal—but I remember now that Edouard and I can wear the same clothes and have many a time."

"But I say, don't be so hoggish. There's other people in the world besides you. You'd never have thought of making that river cruise now, would you?"

"No, you couldn't have got Helena aboard the boat if you had, now, could you?"

"No."

"Let's along the old girl, her revered aunt!" He did another thing, too, his own pink striped waistcoat. "See how you a lot, I am not of the impression!"

"No, I think she rather favored you," I replied gravely.

"No chance! And I say, isn't Sally a humbugger? Just the sort for me—something doing every minute. And a fellow can always tell just what she's thinking!"

"I'm not right sure, Cal, whether that's safe to say of any woman," said I. "A ship on the sea or a serpent on a rock has—in my own opinion—no manner of speech, my friend—no to speak, nothing on the way of a maid with a man. But so on, I do con gratulate you. Do you know old man, I don't think you're a good wife—"

"Come again, Ayler—what's that?" "Gone on her."

"Oh, not at all, not at all—not in the least! Why, I can't see what in the world—oh, well, of course, you know, she's fine. But what I mean is, why—there was Sally, you know. Say, do you know why I wanted to get Sally away on that boat? I was afraid you'd cut in somewhere, run across her down at Mardi Gras or something. And I just figured, once you got a girl on a boat that way, away from all the other fellows, you know, why, even a plain chap like me would have a chance, do you see? And I say, now, I'll own it up—I was right down jealous of you too! Wasn't I silly? And I ask your pardon. You're an awfully good sort, Harry, though you're so serious. You got too much in earnest."

take things too hard, you know. Will you shake hands with me, Cal?"

And I, on precisely those terms about having been an awful fool. It's you who are the best chap in the world. And I'll admit it—I was jealous of you!"

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One Chiffon Waist, (\$3.00 value) for \$1.00

One Children's All Wool Sweater (2 to 6 years, \$3.00 value) for \$1.00

Four Lace Boudoir Caps, (\$2.00 worth of mdse.) for \$1.00

One Duckling Fleece Kimono, satin and self trimmed (\$1.50 value) for \$1.00

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One Duckling Fleece Kimono, satin and self trimmed (\$1.50 value) for \$1.00

Four Women's Shirt Waists, (\$2.00 worth of mdse.) for \$1.00

Four Breakfast Skirts, (\$2.00 worth of mdse.) for \$1.00

Two Women's House Dresses, (\$2.00 worth of mdse.) for \$1.00

One B. & J. brand Corset, (\$3.00 to \$7.50 values) for \$1.00

Two B. & J. brand Brassieres, (\$2.00 values) for \$1.00

Two Gingham or Satin Petticoats, (\$2.00 worth of mdse.) for \$1.00

One Street Summer Dress, (original values \$3.00 to \$5.00) for \$1.00

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Four pair Children's Muslin Drawers, Three Corsets, size 14 only, Three Women's Turbans (\$3.50 worth of mdse.) for \$1

Many other bargains on sale. This is the second week of our Factory and Mill Sale—See goods on display in the window.



Two Women's House Dresses, (\$2.00 worth of mdse.) for \$1.00

One B. & J. brand Corset, (\$3.00 to \$7.50 values) for \$1.00

Two B. & J. brand Brassieres, (\$2.00 values) for \$1.00

Two Gingham or Satin Petticoats, (\$2.00 worth of mdse.) for \$1.00

One Street Summer Dress, (original values \$3.00 to \$5.00) for \$1.00

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"And I want very much to see Helena," said I; "only it's going to be rather harder now to meet her—and Mrs. Danvers."

"Well, I don't know," said Cal Davidson; "every fellow plays his own system. There's something in what you say about women having a good poker face so far as telling what they think about a man is concerned—yes, for instance, how much did Helena know I knew or knew you knew or thought you knew—well, you get me? But the trouble with you is you ain't romantic in your temperament like me. But if I was you I wouldn't be scared to tell Mrs. Danvers I had a dollar and a quarter or so left. It'll bother the blow some to her maybe. And as for Helena—"

"And as for Helena, I can look her in the face, and she can see how And—will you telephone to New Iberia for a minister-at-once—for this evening?"

"Because tonight," I answered, "I am going to marry my fair captive, you heartless jade Helena. I've loved her always, rich or poor, and she loves me, rich or poor. And we shall live happy ever after. And may God bless us and all true lovers."

"Amen!" I heard some one say and have often wondered whether it was a voice, the mocking bird, or Cal Davidson himself who spoke. I looked around for Partial. He had followed Helena.

And will you tell Edouard to have his man lay out his best evening clothes for me—tell him I'll trade him those of my cook's for a—"

THE END.

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